

M-I-T Student Mobility Programme

Pilot Project Review

2010



This Report reviews the 2010 Pilot Project of the Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand (M-I-T) Higher Education Student Mobility Programme. The Pilot Project was conducted in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia; the Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of National Education, Indonesia, the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development.

SEAMEO RIHED

SEAMEO RIHED is the Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development working for 11 Member Countries in Southeast Asia under the umbrella of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO)

M-I-T Student Mobility Programme: Pilot Project Review 2010

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Executive Summary

Background

The Student Mobility Programme was initiated to encourage and facilitate regional higher education student mobility in Southeast Asia, where a student spends a period of their studies in another country. The Programme was initiated in support of the goals of the Framework for Regional Integration in Higher Education in Southeast Asia: The Road Towards a Common Space (SEAMEO RIHED, 2007). Student Mobility was identified as a key mechanism to be developed as part of the Framework.

A pilot project was initiated in 2009 to actively initiate regional higher education student mobility through regional cooperation, and address potential barriers to mobility activities. The Malaysia-Indonesia-Thailand (M-I-T) Student Mobility Programme Pilot Project was initiated in 2009 through the participation of the governments of the three countries. It was developed as a precursor to expanding a student mobility programme to the Southeast Asian region and beyond. This report was commissioned by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED) as a scoping study of the student mobility project.

This report aims to identify issues, gaps and solutions in relation to higher education student mobility in the three countries and is based on information obtained at M-I-T Pilot Project planning and implementation meetings, as well as feedback obtained from government representatives, Higher Education Institution (HEI) staff and students.

Key findings and recommendations

The Review found that the pilot project has been very successful in initiating a higher education student mobility programme in the region. 117 students undertook studies as part of this project in 2010, easily allowing the project to meet and exceed its objective of 150 students undertaking study by the end of 2011.

The Review Report identifies three clear areas for development to strengthen and further expand the student mobility programme to the year 2015.

1. Firstly, to **Review Structural Issues** such as matters of conflicting academic calendars, visa regulations, quality assurance, credit transfer and academic recognition. These matters remain to be discussed and acted upon at policy-maker level. Actions to support this include:
 - Ensure quality assurance standards of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) undertaking student mobility programmes

- Implement the Southeast Asian Credit Transfer System as a matter of urgency
 - Discuss either moving towards a common ASEAN academic calendar or provide direction to Higher Education Institutions to be flexible in accepting mobility students
 - Consider the development of a short-term 'mobility visa' in each country.
 - Further consider whether to move towards a common Southeast Asian Common Education Area or harmonise education systems while maintaining the diversity of individual nations education systems.
2. A second set of actions will further **Ensure Programme Quality**. The professionalism and academic excellence of participating HEI's has resulted in the excellent quality of the project, making it a resounding success. Several further actions will more systematically ensure the quality of the mobility programme and therefore guarantee its ongoing sustainability. These include developing a quality system for student mobility, reviewing insurance, developing stakeholder charters and potentially centralising some administration tasks. Country Coordinators can work collaboratively to develop frameworks for these actions, which will then be utilised by individual HEI's. Supporting activities include:
- Provide practical training opportunities for HEI staff in using the UMAP Credit Transfer system
 - Oversee the development of Mobility Quality Assurance System including toolkits for university staff to use for processing mobility students
 - Develop Mobility Charters for stakeholders
 - Investigate the possibility of a group insurance programme or other assurance mechanism
 - Consider centralising some administrative, and potentially, financial, functions.
3. The final area relates to **Building Commitment**. These actions will build commitment both within the current programme and in encouraging new countries to participate. These actions firstly ensure that the countries and HEI's who have committed to the programme are supported through to implementation, and secondly, the actions support expanding the programme to allow new countries to participate in an ASEAN (and beyond) mobility. Actions for current countries relate to Ministries of Education and HEI's, and the final two actions relate to SEAMEO RIHED:
- Ministries of Education to release funds to Institutions to support mobility projects and Higher Education Institutions to recruit students
 - Biannual review meetings to be conducted
 - SEAMEO RIHED to invite interested nations to the 5th Director General, Secretary General, Commissioner of Higher Education in Southeast Asia Meeting. Further country recruitment will commence in 2013.

Conclusion

The review of the M-I-T Student Mobility Programme Pilot Project found a very successful implementation project. The pilot project was very successful in initiating a regionally-driven higher education student mobility programme in the region. This Review Report highlights the many areas already completed, and the areas of future collaboration in the existing mobility framework that will be helpful to the evolving programme. It is hoped that building on these aspects and developing the process will be of value in expanding the project to the ASEAN nations and beyond.

The Report will be tabled for consideration at the 1st M-I-T Review Meeting and the 5th Director General, Secretary General, Commissioner of Higher Education in Southeast Asia Meeting. Upon approval, a finalised version will be tabled at the 19th SEAMEO RIHED Governing Board Meeting.

Introduction

Rapid changes to higher education under the conditions of globalisation have seen a shift from autonomous inward facing Higher Education Institutions (HEI), to regionalised, commercialised entities. At the same time, governments in the Southeast Asian region are acknowledging the importance of a highly skilled work force to meet their countries growing human resource needs, as well as the role of education in ongoing productivity and economic growth. Governments are also considering the place of international education in providing the quantity, quality and diversity of education services required (The Centre for International Economics, 2008). These trends mean that the higher education landscape must become “more internationalised, cross-cultural, cross-bordered and further engaged with job markets and economic growth” (SEAMEO RIHED, 2009, p. 6).

In order to meet these needs, countries in various regions such as Europe, Africa and Central America are promoting common policies in higher education (SEAMEO RIHED, 2008, p. 4). In line with this tendency, RIHED has been working in cooperation with member nations to promote a higher education common space in Southeast Asia, through the development of the harmonisation process and implementation of the Framework for Regional Integration in Higher Education in Southeast Asia: The Road Towards a Common Space (the Framework) (SEAMEO RIHED, 2007).

Background to the Harmonisation Framework

The Framework was proposed to 15th SEAMEO RIHED Governing Board Meeting held in August 2007, the 30th Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) High Officials Meeting in early November 2007 and SEAMEO RIHED’s 2nd Director General, Secretary General and Commissioner of Higher Education Meeting in late November of the same year. The Framework was endorsed at the 43rd SEAMEO Council Conference in March 2008.

The Framework firstly aimed to raise policy makers and high officials’s awareness of the significance of an inter-governmental process, and secondly, to identify and oversee the mechanisms to be used for harmonisation. In line with the second objective, the five key mechanisms to support the harmonisation process were defined at the 2nd Director General, Secretary General and Commissioner of Higher Education Meeting:

- ASEAN Quality Framework and Curriculum Development;
- Student Mobility;
- Leadership;
- E-Learning and Mobile Learning, and
- ASEAN Research Clusters.

The Framework was launched at the conference Raising Awareness: Exploring the Ideas of Creating Higher Education Common Space in Southeast Asia, held 6 to 7 November 2008, Bangkok Thailand. Five pre-conference workshops were also held in Malaysia, Indonesia, the Phillipines, Thailand and Vietnam. The Japan Foundation and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Australia supported these conferences.

Background to the Student Mobility Project

Mobility of students, academics and administrative staff is one of the key pillars of establishing a Southeast Asian Higher Education area. As mobility has a positive impact on academic and cultural development as well as political, social and economic spheres, student mobility was identified as one of the key mechanisms to support the harmonisation framework.

However, as obstacles stand in the way of a functional Southeast Asian mobility programme, a pilot project was designed to build the path to a sustainable, longer-term student mobility programme. Three countries conducted a pilot project to actively encourage and facilitate regional student mobility, and also, identify potential obstacles to developing further successful mobility programmes. The participating countries Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand collaborated to initiate the project in 2009 and see its launch in 2010.

The Malaysia-Indonesia-Thailand (M-I-T) Student Mobility Programme Pilot Project (hereafter referred to as the project) was initiated through the participation of the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia; the Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of National Education, Indonesia; and the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education, Thailand. The governments of the three countries agreed to collaborate on student mobility in the region, through cooperation amongst higher education institutions, the alignment of academic calendars and a mutually agreed credit transfer process. This project was developed as a precursor to expanding a student mobility programme (referred to as the programme) to the Southeast Asian region and beyond.

The project aimed to lay a foundation from which to develop sustainable and ongoing student mobility programmes in Southeast Asia, in order to assist with the transition towards the ASEAN community by 2015. Other project objectives included:

- Promoting a regionally cooperative approach to student mobility
- Encouraging the structural convergence of education systems to support mobility
- Creating sustainable movements of students
- Removing structural differences that impede student movement, and
- Developing an appropriate credit transfer system.

To meet these goals, Ministers and senior officials agreed on six actions:

- A pilot mobility programme would commence in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand
- Incorporating 23 Universities
- Disciplines of Agriculture, Language and Culture, Hospitality and Business, International Business, and Food Science and Technology
- Mobility placements to be at least one semester duration
- 150 students would participate by the end of 2011, and
- The UMAP Credit Transfer System (UCTS) the agreed credit transfer system until a regional system was developed.

The government representatives of countries participating in the project agreed to progress these initiatives through their active participation, supported by SEAMEO RIHED. The outcomes of the project are the result of four succeeding meetings¹, which laid out the foundation for the programme implementation and sustainability.

Background to the Report

This report was commissioned by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED) as a scoping study of the student mobility pilot project underway in support of the goals of the Framework. To promote collaboration in the area of student mobility, this scoping study has been undertaken in order to identify items of good practice and lessons learned, to recognise issues and solutions already in existence, and finally to collate recommendations for future directions. This report aims to identify highlights, issues, gaps and solutions in relation to higher education student mobility in the three countries and is based on information obtained at M-I-T Project planning and implementation meetings, feedback invited from governments and HEI's and student data obtained from M-I-T social media sites.

This study consisted of two main steps:

- Collection of feedback from the four M-I-T Meetings, from HEI's and government representatives and student alumni social media sites; and
- Development of the report collating the feedback, identifying trends and analysing implications for student mobility in the region.

¹ The 1st M-I-T Mobility Meeting held 28 August 2009 in Bangkok Thailand, the 2nd M-I-T Mobility Meeting 15 to 16 October 2009 in Bangkok Thailand, the 3rd M-I-T Mobility Meeting (International Relations Officer Meeting) held 7 to 9 December 2009 in Jakarta Indonesia and the Review Meeting held 27 to 28 September 2010, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

It is important to note that this review exercise has not been to establish the value of student mobility, but to evaluate and advise on the process of establishing a student mobility programme in Southeast Asia.

The pilot project used an action learning methodology to develop the programme, with participants committed to learning by doing. Meetings required participants to report on the project's successes and highlight areas of concerns. Meetings also provided an opportunity for participants to generate solutions to problems together. This report builds upon the action learning methodology, using the knowledge of the participants in the four M-I-T meetings to provide its material, collected through participant-observation. Student feedback was also collected through social media sites and alumni groups.

The report collates the opinions of four distinct groups of participants; firstly, the policy makers or government officials responsible for student mobility in the three countries; secondly, representatives from HEI's international offices; thirdly, discipline specific staff from HEI's and fourthly, students participants of the programme. Based on the results of the scoping study, this report describes significant successes, challenges and trends as experienced by participants across countries. It firstly provides the background to the pilot project, including progress, quantitative information and student engagement. The report then shares stories of good practice by detailing the elements that support mobility, before detailing the challenges faced and identified solutions. The report also collates feedback from all sources and makes recommendations in three broad areas; firstly, reviewing structural issues, secondly, actions that will systematically ensure programme quality, and thirdly, actions to build commitment. The report concludes by detailing the next steps to expand the programme up to the year 2015.

The Pilot Project

The project provided a platform for regional engagement through a series of M-I-T Student Mobility meetings. These meetings were essential in the development of a Southeast Asian model for higher education student mobility.

The first meeting (28 August 2009, Bangkok Thailand) was attended by key policy-makers from the three countries. It identified five disciplines suitable for pilot undergraduate student mobility, namely agriculture, language and culture, hospitality and tourism, international business and food science and technology. The University Mobility in the Asia Pacific Credit Transfer System (UMAP) was chosen as a recognition platform, pending the development of a regional credit transfer system. Furthermore, the meeting reached decisions about budget allocation, language used in the project, numbers of participating universities and targeted numbers of students. There was also an agreement as to the level of support to be provided by the government in the student's home country (Home) and the receiving government (Host).

The follow-up meeting was held 15-16 October 2009, in Bangkok, Thailand and aimed to reach decisions on the project and allow HEI's to identify and compare course syllabus. The meeting came to the agreement that the project would commence in 2010. 150 students would participate in the programme, 25 outgoing students from each of the three participating countries.

	Indonesia	Malaysia	Thailand	Total	
Indonesia		25	25	50	Sending / Outgoing
Malaysia	25		25	50	
Thailand	25	25		50	
Total	50	50	50	150	
Hosting / Incoming					

Figure 1: Projected numbers agreed at First M-I-T Mobility Programme (28 August 2009)

The respective Offices of Higher Education selected their countries leading universities to participate in the pilot. The Second Meeting included representatives from the 23 participating universities. 6 universities from Malaysia, 11 universities from Indonesia and 6 universities from Thailand are participating in the project. The HEI's compared course syllabus to identify courses suitable for credit transfer between partner institutes and designate relevant subjects for mobility students to undertake. Additionally, most participating universities came to a preliminary agreement on the number of outgoing and incoming students and the duration of the programme.

Participating Higher Education Institutions

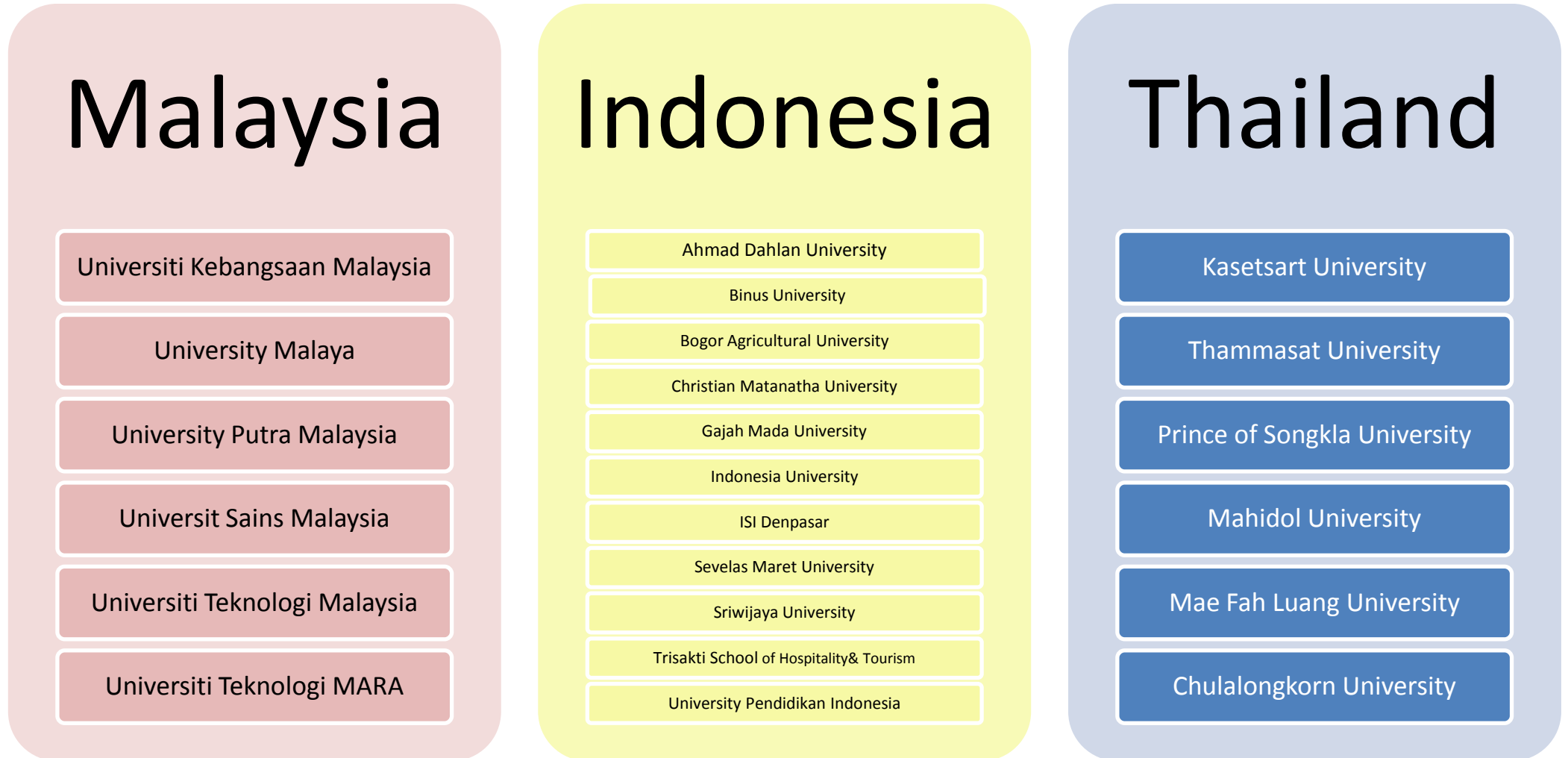


Figure 2: Participating Universities

The Fourth Meeting was held 27 to 28 September 2010, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Meeting identified impediments to exchange and designed actions to resolve those issues. Recommendations included the appointment of a Country Coordinator to act as a central information resource for mobility in that country, the development of a Student Manual and mobility information for the Ministry of Education website, and biannual review meetings with relevant stakeholders.

The meeting noted that several non-participating countries had expressed an interest in becoming involved in a Southeast Asian Student Mobility Programme. There was general agreement on the benefits of expanding the programme to more countries, including the 'Plus Three' countries China, Japan and Korea. There was also agreement that the programme should expand to include larger student numbers. The meeting recommended that the pilot project activities be reported on to the High Officials Meeting (November 2010) and Director General, Secretary General, Commissioner of Higher Education Meeting (February 2011), for approval of the expansion.

Project Progress

Due to the close collaboration and great effort among the M-I-T countries there was significant progress of the project. Actual figures as of December 2010 indicate that 117 students have completed, are undertaking or are scheduled to undertake overseas study as part of the project in 2010.

Number of students

Home	Malaysia		Indonesia		Thailand		
Host	Indonesia	Thailand	Malaysia	Thailand	Malaysia	Indonesia	Total
	-	4	45	32	22	14	117

Figure 3: Actual numbers at 31 December 2010

Students by Discipline

Discipline	Malaysia				Indonesia				Thailand			
	Inbound		Outbound		Inbound		Outbound		Inbound		Outbound	
	I	T	I	T	M	T	M	T	I	M	I	M
Agriculture	7	3	-	4	-	-	7	12	12	4	-	3
Language and Culture	13	5	-	-	-	-	13	6	6	-	-	5
Hospitality and Tourism	7	4	-	-	-	6	7	7	7	-	6	4
International Business	10	5	-	-	-	5	10	5	5	-	5	5
Food Science and Technology	8	5	-	-	-	3	8	2	2	-	3	5
Total 117	45	22	0	4	0	14	45	32	32	4	14	22

Figure 4: Students by discipline at 31 December 2010

Student perspectives

Students were quick to take up a Facebook page (M-I-T Spirit of Friendship), established by Thailand's Country Coordinator. They also established another informal network through a Yahoo Group Page. Feedback on the project was consistently positive, with students often articulating the social benefits of understanding a culture other than their own.

The Facebook page was a communication source between HEI's, the Country Coordinator and students. Students were able to upload photos of events and discuss the benefits of the programme.

The Yahoo Group allowed students to share their valuable experiences with each other, acting as an informal network. Commencing students were also able to speak with alumni, who shared their experience of Institute's study culture, and provided staff contacts within the university. The group site was also frequently used for sharing information about other non-related scholarships.

There were many examples of the students helping to answer commencing students' questions about insurance requirements and providing advice on financial matters.



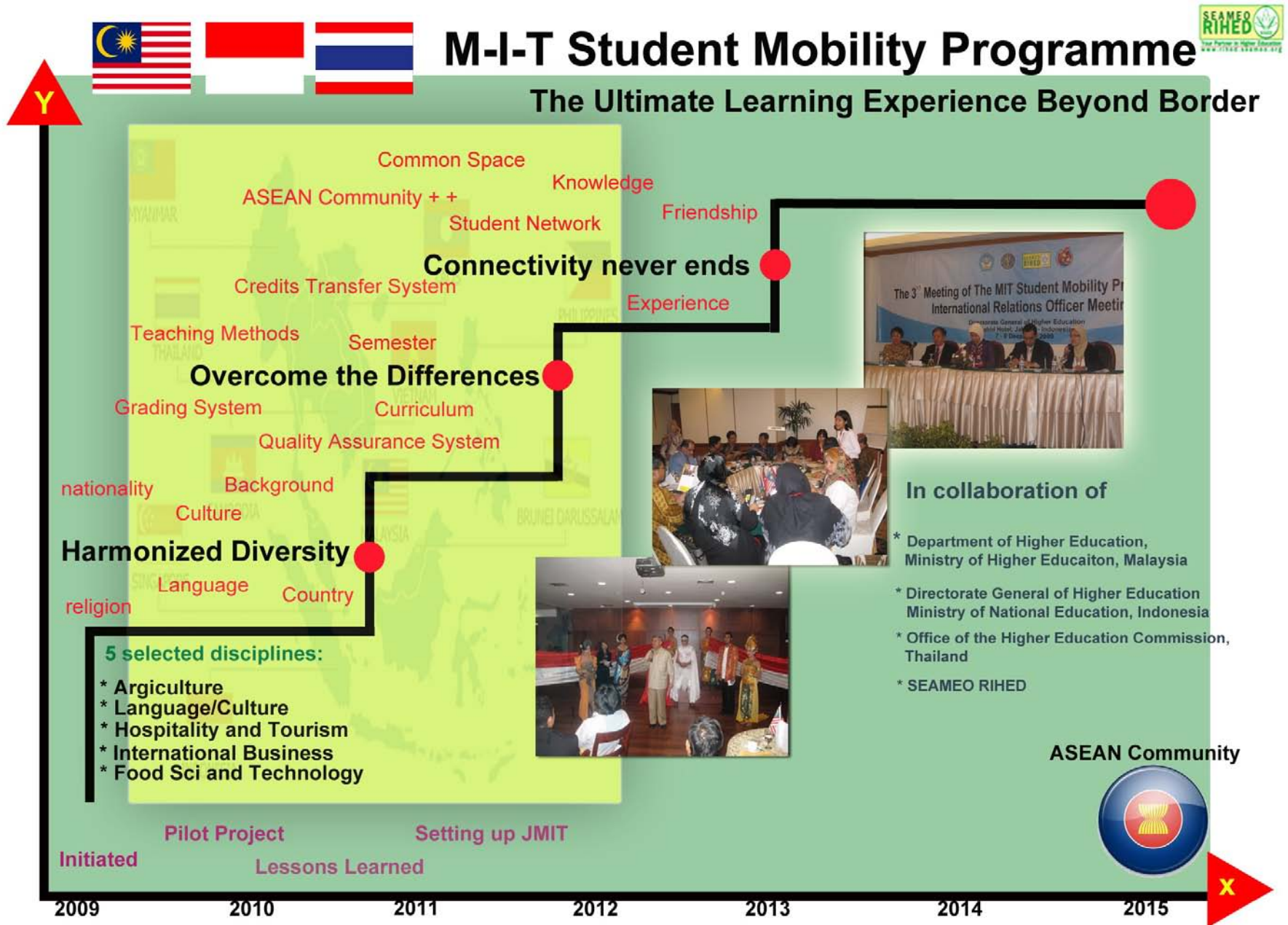


Figure 5: M-I-T Student Mobility Programme Concept Map (Pattanotai, 2010)

Key elements supporting mobility

Pilot programme participants identified success stories of several elements that support the mobility process. These essential elements or examples of good practice include:

- It is noted that dedicated financial support from the responsible Ministries of Education and Ministries of Higher Education is the most important success factor in a student mobility programme.
- The structured meetings and review meetings for policy-makers and HEIs. These were particularly beneficial to staff in individual HEIs. Staff who did not attend the meetings were at a particular disadvantage when attempting map credit transfers or communicate with partner HEI's.
- Building trust between HEI's in order to develop good communication which facilitates mobility.
- A minimum of two students mobilise each intake, minimising potential student isolation.
- Simple enrolment procedures, agreed before departure between partner universities and clearly explained to student.
- Ensuring that students are provided with structured and adequate pre-briefing and in-country orientation programmes.
- A lecturer or escort from the Home Institution should travel with the students to assist with students smooth induction into the host organisation, particularly for the first round of mobility placements.
- Use of a designated communication device to ensure immediate communication between students and HEI. One HEI provided a blackberry to each mobility student as a communication device.

Key challenges faced and identified solutions

Pilot programme participants also identified several barriers that can be addressed to ensure the easy implementation of the mobility process, including:

1. Different academic calendar within each country and at each institution mean that there are often calendar clashes when plotting academic mobility for students. In some cases, there has been no clear window of free time for students to undertake mobility placements, meaning that their participation negatively affects the following semester study. Flexibility in programmes and scheduling has been the short-term solution to this issue, and it is the predominant solution globally. The most recent M-I-T meeting agreed that matters of academic calendars should be resolved between universities.
2. The varying length of time, cost and process for applying for visas has been identified as a barrier. In some cases, a student are asked to apply for a tourist visa and then transfer to a student visa, resulting in high costs to the individual. There is no consistent visa and process across the three countries for mobility students.

In the short term it has been agreed that a Letter of Acceptance should be issued prior the departure of the students to assist with the visa application. Discussions have already commenced with embassy officials with suggestions of how to ease visa processing for students. Additionally, RIHED has recommended that responsible Ministries of Education take up this matter with their Immigration Ministries to ease visa restrictions for mobility programmes.

3. In some cases, HEI's has not met their commitment for student numbers, or exceeded their quotas. This may be both a Ministry and HEI issue, as funding from governments (or lack thereof) has been identified as a key success factor to mobility.

In order to ensure the ongoing sustainability and viability of the programme, Governments must meet their agreed commitments to the programme. At an operational level, anticipated student numbers should be formalised through clear but flexible mutual agreements between HEI's. It may be most useful for agreements to span at least two years, meaning that unexpected fluctuations can be balanced over a period of time.

4. Receiving due recognition at the Home HEI of the courses undertaken at Host HEI has emerged as a significant issue to ongoing student mobility. Due to difficulties with recognition and credit transfer, some pilot project students did not receive recognition for subjects undertaken while on mobility placements. This resulted in students being effectively penalised for going on mobility, as they will not complete their course at the expected end date. This extra coursework requirement must place extra stress on students already under pressure to cope with the adaptation process. As each education system in the region is different, at first glance subjects may not seem to be identical and therefore credit transfer may be denied. Indeed, HEI's feedback indicated that credit transfer was not feasible for all subjects. Furthermore, it seems that the UMAP Credit Transfer System (UCTS) has had only limited usefulness in overcoming these differences and promoting credit transfer. There has been particular confusion about converting student workload and grades between HEI's. The UCTS has also been inconsistently applied, resulting in a lack of standard across the mobility placements. Given that the objective of UCTS is to 'help make short-term student mobility more effective by ensuring credit for study undertaken on mobility and to facilitate greater mobility' (UMAP Secretariat, 2010), it seems that HEIs need further training to understand the purpose and use of the system.

The key short-term solution to this issue is further training for HEI staff in practical aspects of implementing the UCTS. The UCTS User Guide details the development of a Learning Plan for each student, agreed to by home and host institutions, and the use of the UCTS conversion and grading scales (UMAP Secretariat, 2010). In the longer term, the development of the Southeast Asian Credit Transfer System (SEA CTS) and other mobility mechanisms such as the ASEAN Passport (or diploma supplement) will aid the simple transfer of credits in the region.

5. Identifying and agreeing on subjects to be undertaken by the student is particularly difficult with only limited knowledge of partner HEI's curriculum. If HEI's had a deeper understanding of each others' syllabus, and a flexible approach, this would allow reasonably comparable subjects to be more easily identified. It is therefore desirable to have HEI Coordinators visit partner HEI's in order to build this knowledge. A tour of partner universities in Bangkok will be undertaken in conjunction to the M-I-T Review Meeting in January 2011, to initiate this understanding and communication. Other tours have been independently planned between partner HEI's.

6. There is need for a single representative to act as a focal point for mobility at both national and HEI level. A recent development is the recommendation from the most recent M-I-T meeting that each country has a Country Coordinator to act as a hub of information for the country. Similarly, home organisations have identified the need for a single nominated representative from the host organisation. This would aid communication and make it easier for the home organisation to provide advice to students on the host organisation on the application and enrolment process. This will ensure students are provided with a contact person and simple, clear enrolment procedures for the host HEI, before they arrive in-country. In order to ensure the ongoing sustainability of a mobility programme, it is essential that resources are dedicated to support a HEI's internationalisation strategy, particularly amongst faculty staff who are often expected to support international students without compensation – either financial or workload reduction. Given that in most cases, the nominated representative at HEI's will be the HEI's International Relations Office, SEAMEO RIHED is planning an award to encourage efficiencies in this area. SEAMEO RIHED realises the importance of establishing a supporting infrastructure in promoting the harmonisation process. International Relations Offices (IROs) at HEIs are the crucial actor in facilitating the effective flow of students, academics and administrative staff in the region. Thus, SEAMEO RIHED has developed a new initiative, the Internationalisation Award (I Award) to encourage IROs' to work efficiency (SEAMEO RIHED, 2010).

7. On occasion, students have been required to meet the enrolment conditions for a commencing student at the host organisation, additional to the agreed entry requirements for the M-I-T programme. This includes additional English language and health checks, with the extra costs borne by the student. Participants at the September 2010 M-I-T Meeting agreed that students must be advised of extra checks prior to mobilisation, that they would be conducted at the home institution and results provided to the host institution before the student is accepted by the programme.

8. In addition to the issues with credit transfer listed at point two, students expressed a general lack of clarity around which courses could be taken as a mobility student. Sometimes selected courses were not run in English or did not run at all. A database where suitable courses can be identified, and potentially selected, would ease this issue. Indonesian representatives at the most recent M-I-T Meeting kindly agreed to develop this site, which would include university information for the Programme and a student handbook to facilitate the mobility of students.

9. Funding remains the key issue in implementing and sustaining a successful mobility programme. Participants at the first mobility meeting (August 2009 Bangkok) agreed on the basic financial support that would be provided to the students under this program.

i) The host government or receiving university:

- waive tuition and faculty fees
- provide basic medical provision
- help locate the accommodation
- establish a buddy/tutoring system/ international advisor for incoming students.

ii) The home institution or sending government:

- cover accommodation expenses
- provide international health insurance
- allot monthly allowance, and
- support international travel.

HEI's have noted a lack of clarity on which costs should be borne by HEI versus government agency. Perhaps a standard policy would assist, as would further elaboration of items, including a definition of the basic medical provision, and the maximum amounts that will be paid for accommodation, health insurance, monthly allowances and international travel. Several HEI's requested that extra funding be made available for travel expenses for an accompanying teacher, and for incidentals such as conducting meetings.

Furthermore, data has shown that costs have not clearly identifiable by students wishing to go on mobility. The undefined costs borne by the students have tended to include:

iii) The student:

- visa costs
- extra admission requirements such as English tests, and
- living expenses above the monthly allowance provided.

If students are aware of realistic costs they are more likely to be prepared and able to support their time overseas. Inadequate briefing could result in students being overseas without the required financial resources to support themselves, placing them at risk. Providing detailed information to students before application will mitigate that risk.

Student Mobility Programme - Key Actors Flowchart

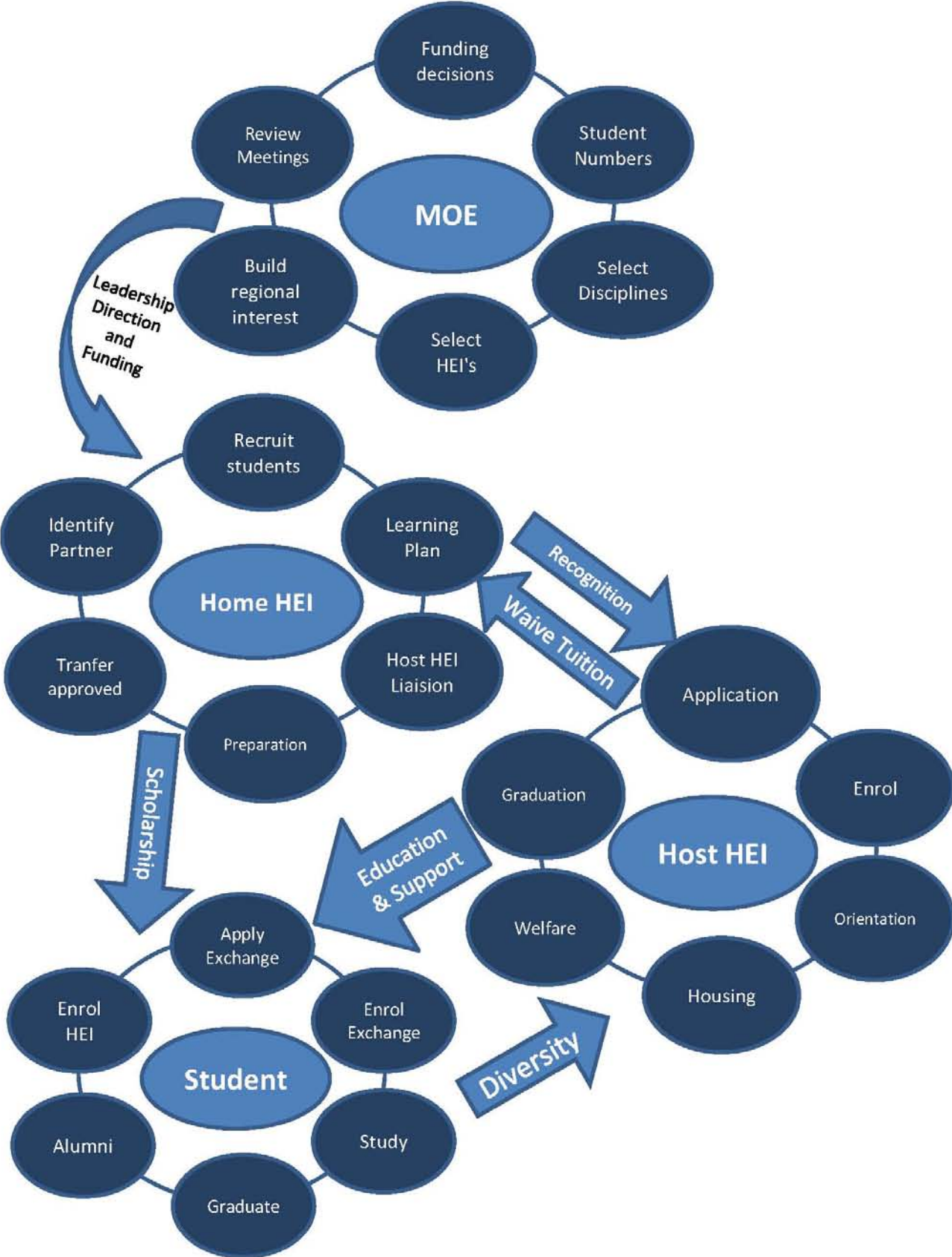


Figure 6: Key Actors Flowchart

Recommendations

Data obtained for the scoping report points to three clear areas for development to strengthen future student mobility programmes, firstly, to review the remaining structural issues, secondly to implement systems to ensure the quality of the programme and finally to implement actions that build commitment both within the programme and with new participants.

Recommendation 1 Reviewing Structural Issues:

Academic Calendar: The different academic calendars have always been a major factor impeding mobility programmes in the region. As part of the process of higher education harmonisation initiated by SEAMEO RIHED, the alignment of academic calendars among countries in Southeast Asia is one of the issues for future discussion. A decision should be made as to whether a common Southeast Asian academic calendar is desirable and an implementation plan developed, or whether individual academic cycles should remain but flexibility between partner HEI's used to encourage mobility.

Decision Required: Recommend moving towards a common ASEAN Academic Calendar or direct HEI's to be flexible in accepting mobility students?

Visa Regulations: Should be streamlined and synchronised to ensure equity for students undertaking the programme, regardless of their origin or destination. In the short term, policy-makers should discuss the possibility of consulting with immigration agencies to relax visa and immigration regulations for mobility students. In the longer term, a short term ASEAN student education and cultural visa, similar to the J Visa used in the United States of America, might be considered in consultation with Education and Immigration Ministries in host countries.

Decision Required: Recommend developing a short-term 'mobility visa' in each country?

Quality Assurance: It is commonly understood that strong higher education quality assurance (QA) systems is key to promoting mutual trust and international cooperation between higher education providers (UNESCO, 2005). It is essential that the work currently underway on strengthening quality assurance in the region is continued through building mutual understanding of QA in the region and through actions such as the strengthening of QA systems and the development of QA networks.

Decision Required: Each country to be active member of ASEAN Quality Assurance Network and ensure quality assurance standards of participating HEI's.

Credit Transfer: The Southeast Asia Credit Transfer System (SEA CTS) is another determining factor for the ongoing success of mobility programmes and should be developed and effectively implemented as a priority. The aim of the SEA CTS is to have the courses selected by participating students fully recognised. This will also increase the variety of choices for core courses, which will be important for student graduation. Additionally, future recognition with non-ASEAN countries could be further strengthened through ratification of the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO, 1983) and the development of an ASEAN diploma supplement.

Action required: Implement SEA-CTS as a matter of urgency.

Additional to the structural aspect relating to credit transfer listed above, there is an implementation aspect which need to be addressed to ensure that students studies are recognised. HEI's need to build their understanding of how to use the UMAP credit transfer system in the short term. This could be facilitated through practical training sessions for HEI staff on how to transfer credits. Furthermore, individual learning agreements must be made a pre-requisite for participation and tools and procedures must be developed to facilitate both the elaboration, follow-up and evaluation of student mobility placements. This would avoid circumstances where participating students study subjects that are ultimately not credited. A credit should be identified for all courses studied while on mobility, through effective mapping of units. To support this, a public database of programs delivered in English, which are suitable for taking under this program, should be easily accessible. This mutual platform of information should be on a single website.

Action required: Provide practical training opportunities for HEI staff in using the UMAP Credit Transfer System

Recognition: In the long run, the recognition issue must be placed on the political agenda and Member States must be engaged in a dialogue as to how it is most meaningfully tackled. The ASEAN region may follow the lead of Europe in developing the European Higher Education Area, whereby Europe reviewed the education systems of all member nations, creating a more comparable, compatible and coherent system of higher education in the region through the Bologna Process (Romanian Bologna Secretariat, 2010). Alternatively, cooperation may be achievable while respecting the diversity of education systems already in place in the region.

Decision required: Recommend moving towards a common Southeast Asian Common Education Area or maintaining the diversity of individual national education systems?

Recommendation 2 Ensuring Programme Quality:

Due to the professionalism and excellence of participating HEI's, the mobility programme has been very successful. However, several actions can be undertaken to systematically ensure the quality of the mobility programme and therefore guarantee its ongoing sustainability.

Mobility Quality Assurance System: should be developed in order to ensure the consistent duty of care of mobility students. Manuals and toolboxes should be developed to cover areas like:

- student selection
- accommodation placement
- intercultural and psychological preparation and debriefing of students
- monitoring (risk management)
- counselling of students
- training courses for people in charge of sending and hosting
- materials for preparation and debriefing, and
- a manual for risk prevention and crisis management.

Some level of centralisation in the duty of care aspects may be advisable, commonly developed manuals and toolboxes may encourage both consistency and uptake.

Indeed, as this programme grows member nations may think it more useful to centralise further actions in order to ensure consistency. This may result in a centralised section to manage grants, award projects and oversee the website to manage statistics.

Action required: Delegate development of Mobility Quality Assurance System.

Insurance: Given the variations on travel coverage taken by students it would also seem useful to define the basic medical coverage to be provided by the host HEI. In addition, to investigate the possibility of a joint insurance scheme for all participants, or some other mechanism, to ensure full and uniform insurance coverage for all participating students.

Action required: Delegate investigating insurance and recommendation.

Charters: Programme quality might also be strengthened by the development of charters for each group of stakeholders in the programme. Charters would aim to guarantee the quality of the programme by setting certain fundamental principles. A HEI Charter could set out the principles and minimum requirements with which a HEI must comply when implementing its mobility activities, similar to that required under the Erasmus programme (European Commission, 2010), and be a pre-requisite of receiving government funding to support mobility. A Student Charter could set out rights and responsibilities before they apply for a

mobility placement, including a clear and comprehensive list of anticipated costs. A Government Charter could define government responsibilities for the overall programme implementation, and benchmark the minimum government support required for participation in the programme.

Action required: Delegate development of Mobility Charters.

Recommendation 3 Building Commitment:

Building commitment to student mobility covers two related areas, firstly, ensuring that countries that have made a commitment to the programme are supported through to implementation, and secondly, expanding the programme to allow new countries to participate in the ASEAN Mobility Programme.

Ongoing commitment: Representatives from Indonesia Malaysia and Thailand used the most recent M-I-T Meeting to restate the importance of M-I-T Mobility Programme at the policy level, which will be a part of ASEAN integration by 2015. Government representatives from the three countries reaffirmed their commitment to providing scholarships to support students undertaking the M-I-T Programme. Participating HEI's were directed to commence the process of selecting their mobility students for the second batch, to meet the goal of 150 students undertaking mobility under the programme by the end of 2011.

Action required: HEI's to recruit a further round of students.

Meeting Commitments: It is noted that dedicated financial support from the responsible ministries of education or ministries of higher education is the most important success factor to successful mobility programmes. It is therefore essential that commitments undertaken by governments are met. A Government Charter would ensure that governments were aware of their responsibilities under the programme, thus maximising the chance of funds being available for the expenses arising.

Action required: MOE's to release funds to HEI's.

Regular Review Meetings: Biannual review meetings should be held to facilitate discussion and relationship building amongst stakeholders. Thailand agreed to host the first review meeting in January 2011. It was decided that University representatives from each country should join every meeting so they could follow up the commitment of the meeting.

Action required: Biannual review meetings to be conducted.

Obtaining commitment of new nations: authority to expand the project was received from SEAMEO member nations at the 33rd SEAMEO High Officials Meeting. Member nations agreed to encourage the departments or offices responsible for higher education to participate in the M-I-T Student Mobility Programme and give financial and in-kind support to the higher education institutions in their countries to participate in the M-I-T Student Mobility Programme.

Secondly, the M-I-T Programme shall be reported to SEAMEO RIHED Director General, Secretary General, Commissioner of Higher Education Meeting in February for further consideration. Additional countries should be invited to become involved in the Programme at the meeting. Select countries outside the region should also be invited to attend the meeting, in order to hear about the programme and explore future collaborations.

Action required: SEAMEO RIHED to invite interested nations to participate in the Programme.

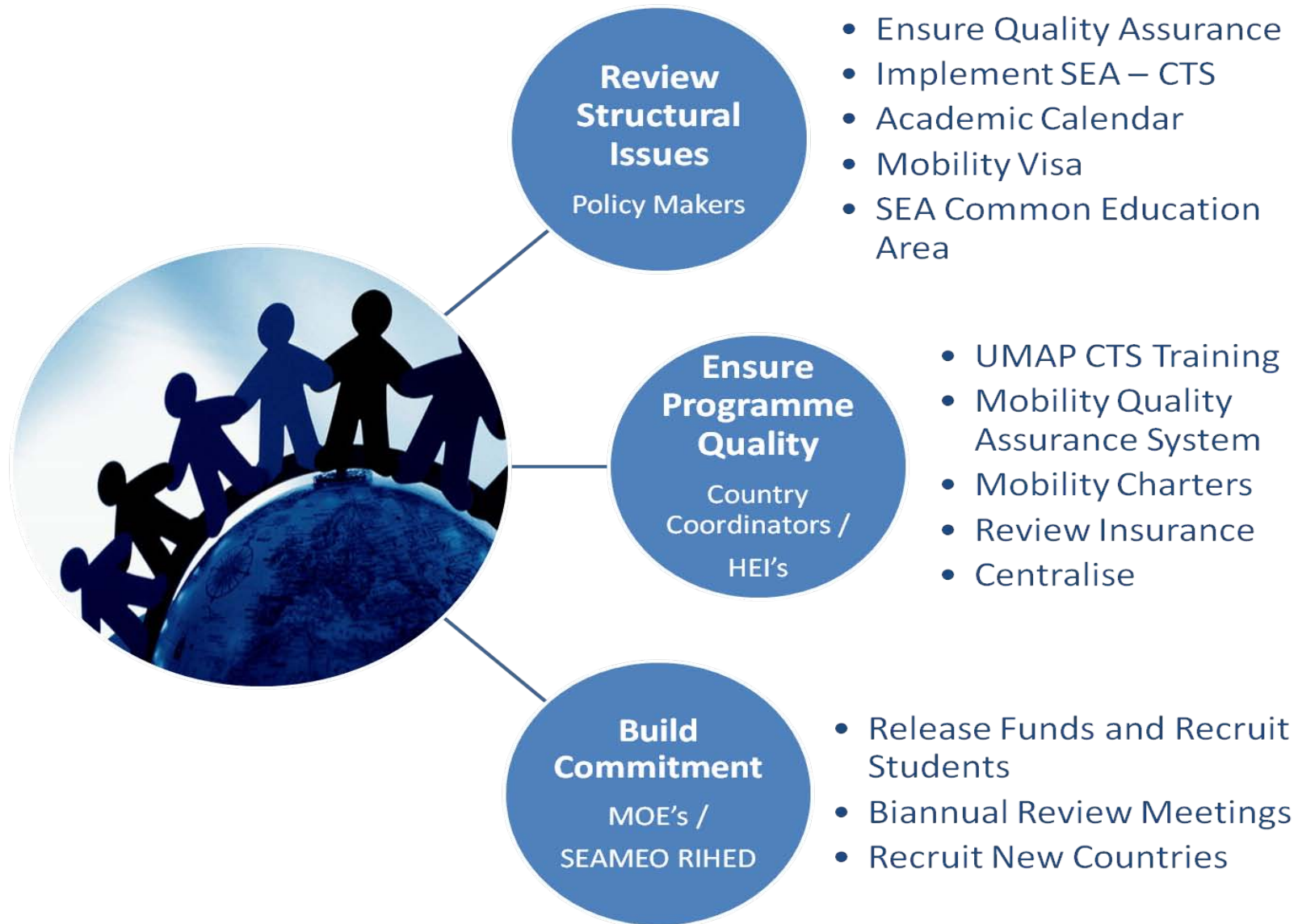


Figure 7: Review Recommendations

Next Steps

The Programme was designed to commence with 5 disciplines and 3 countries seeing 150 students completing a mobility placement by the end of 2011, expanding to 300 students, 7 disciplines and 5 countries by 2013 and reach 500 students, 10 disciplines and 10 countries by 2015. This will be reviewed at the 4th M-I-T Mobility meeting to be held in 2011, which will review the future development of the programme and to confirm further expansions to scope, range and number of participating students, programmes and countries.

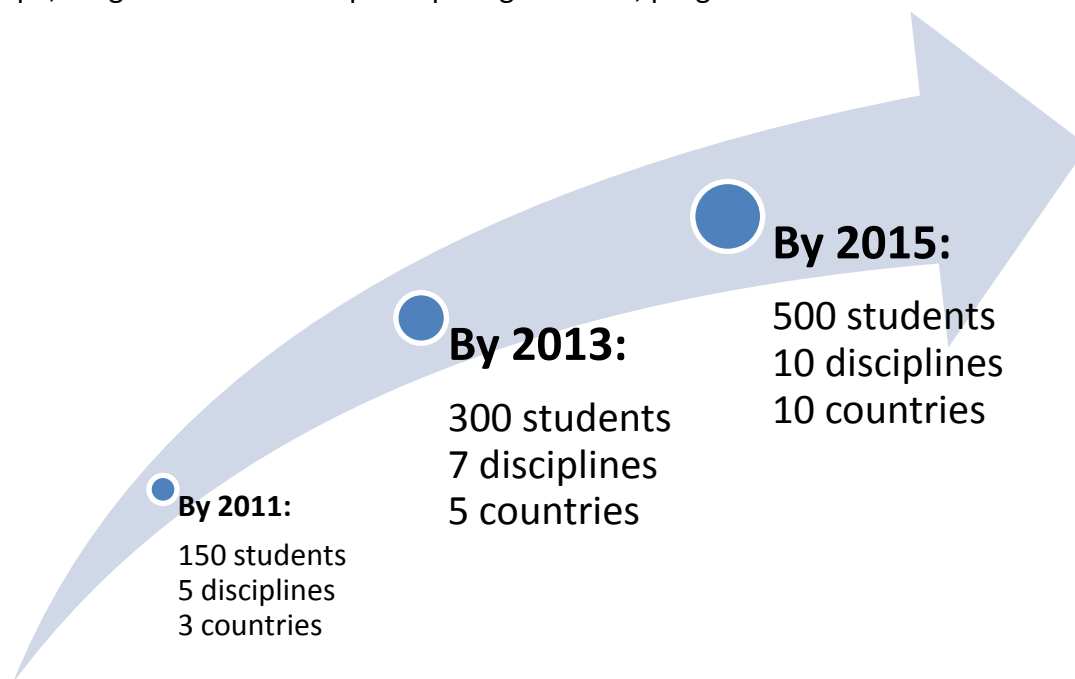


Figure 8: Proposed Expansion of Programme

In order to meet the agreed objectives, ongoing stakeholders will participate in the biannual review meetings, the first to be held in Bangkok as detailed above. The programme will be expanded by inviting potential countries to participate through a back-to-back presentation at the SEAMEO RIHED Director General, Secretary General, Commissioner of Higher Education Meeting. These 'recruitment sessions' will occur in February 2011 and 2013.

Phase	Action	Jan 2011	Feb 2011	Jul 2011	Jan 2012	July 2012	Jan 2013	Feb 2013	July 2013	Jan 2014	July 2014	Jan 2015	July 2015
I	Implement	*	*	*									
II	Recruit Countries		*										
	Plan			*									
	Implement				*	*	*	*	*				
III	Recruit							*					
	Plan								*				
	Implement									*	*	*	*

Figure 9: Implementation Milestones

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